

Cyrus Gates House

HABS No. NY-5540

West side of Old Nanticoke Road, 4 miles north of intersection  
of Nanticoke Road with N.Y. Route 26

Maine Vicinity

Broome County

New York

HABS  
NY  
4-MAIN.V,  
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

## CYRUS GATES HOUSE

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Location: West side of Old Nanticoke Road, 4 miles north  
of intersection of Nanticoke Road with N.Y.  
Route 26, Maine Vicinity, Broome County, New York

Present Owner: Mr. and Mrs. Paul O. Gunsalus

Present Occupant: Mr. and Mrs. Gunsalus

Present Use: Residence

Brief Statement  
of Significance: A late Greek Revival farmhouse of good  
exterior design associated with the "under-  
ground railroad" and the harboring of fugitive  
slaves in years preceding the Civil War.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: Property has been in the same family since c. 1794. Original owner of house Cyrus Gates, then son, Byron Gates, and grandson Russell Gates, and great-granddaughter Louise Gates Gunsalus.
2. Date of erection: Begun 1848, completed 1851. (House built in the summers from 1849 to 1851)
3. Architect: Charles Yarrington of New York City.
4. Builder, suppliers, etc.: Charles Yarrington of New York City was builder and architect. He left signature and Masonic emblem on one of the doors together with the date 1851. Local materials of wood were used. Plaster ceiling ornaments came from New York City.
5. Original plan and construction: The owner chose to follow some parts of the plan of a house he had seen in another county. Open stair plan was changed before completion to closed stairway because of cold draughts. Hand-graining was done by Yarrington on woodwork of lower floor. No local carpenters were employed on construction of the house. A wooden ornamental balustrade was

originally on the two wings.

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6. Alterations and additions: There have been no additions. Most alterations have been internal. A wide entrance hall (now the parlor) originally had a solid rear wall. This was subsequently removed and a wide doorway installed to rear room. The wood shed at the rear of the house was remodeled into a den in 1973. Woodwork and wall changes have been made from time to time. The east room had new cherry woodwork installed about 1915; this was removed by present owner. There have also been changes in partitions and doors. In 1973, the wood shed at the rear of the house was remodeled into a den and the porch along the south side of the ell was enclosed.

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

In the 1830's and subsequent to the Civil War a fugitive slave route existed running through this area. Slaves from the south would stop at Cafferty place in the town of Vestal. The next station was the Luce place near Union Center. From there the next station was the Cyrus Gates farm. Then they went to Bushnell's Corners, near Berkshire, Tioga County, thence to Peruville, near Groton, Tompkins County. Prior to the construction of the Cyrus Gates house, the family lived in an older place nearby and were in the habit of harboring slaves. This is evidenced by the fact that one slave girl, Margaret Cruiser (also called "Black Marge") desired to remain with the Gates family before 1835 and is buried in the family burying-ground on the place. Other slaves came and went. When the family moved into the new house in 1851, slaves continued to be lodged in the house. A small space under the roof with a concealed access through a closet was regarded as a possible hiding-place in case of emergency, but there is no evidence that it was ever used. It is improbable that pursuit would have extended here.

C. Sources of Information:

Oral information from Louise Gates Gunsalus, owner of the property.

Smith, H. P. History of Broom County, N.Y. Philadelphia, 1885. (pp. 493-503)

D. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated: Diary of Byron Gates, in possession of Louise Gates Gunsalus.

Prepared by Clement G. Bowers  
June 30, 1963

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PART II. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records are part of the documentation of structures in the Southern Tier of New York State, undertaken by HABS in cooperation with the Broome County Historical Society and the Valley Development Foundation, Inc.

The project was under the general supervision of John Poppeliers, Chief, Historic American Buildings Survey. The historical material was prepared in June, 1963, by Clement G. Bowers of the Broome County Historical Society. Photographs were taken by Jack E. Boucher, March, 1963. The project was edited for deposit in the Library of Congress by Constance Werner Ramirez, April, 1974.